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C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 002039

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/13/2029
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM PTER PINR KCRM SNAR MX
SUBJECT: LA FAMILIA CARTEL RETALIATES FOR ARREST OF
HIGH-RANKING LEADER

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor James P Merz.
Reason: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. On July, 11, Mexican Federal Police (SSP) arrested Arnold Rueda Media -- the fourth highest ranking member of the organized crime syndicate known as "La Familia" -- at a residence in Morelia, Michoacan in southern Mexico, approximately 120 miles west of Mexico City. When a subsequent rescue attempt failed, La Familia launched a series of attacks on police -- and to a lesser extent the military -- throughout Michoacan as well as the neighboring states of Guerrero and Zacatecas. The attacks produced the deaths of at least three police officials and two soldiers. La Familia is known for its violence, but the apparent ability of this group to undertake a targeted and coordinated attack took look law enforcement officials by surprise. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Mexican Federal Police arrested high ranking La Familia leader Rueda Medina at a residence on July 11. Rueda Medina was reputedly the right hand man of La Familia head Nazario Moreno (AKA "Chayo"). His responsibilities included designating plaza bosses, infiltrating police at all levels, and coordinating attacks against La Familia rival, Las ZETAS.

Rueda Medina maintained international contacts for importation of pseudo-ephedrine and is widely considered one of the most significant methamphetamine traffickers in Mexico. While Rueda Median had been under investigation by SSP and PGR for some time, SSP took the opportunity, independently, to arrest him by using a confrontation between rival factions of LA FAMILIA and ZETAS at two safe houses in Morelia as cover for its operation.

¶3. (SBU) Just minutes after Rueda Medina's arrest, La Familia operatives launched a rescue attempt as authorities sought to transfer Rueda Medina from the residence to a federal post. As part of the rescue attempt, gunman reportedly threw grenades and fired high caliber weapons, including military assault weapons. When the rescue attempt failed, the fire fight spilled out onto the streets of Morelia. Separately, small units of cartel members commenced attacks at locations throughout the area including on a federal police barracks in Patzcuaro, a hotel where police are housed in Apatzingan, a police barracks in the port of Lazaro Cardenas, a police convoy outside Nueva Italia, and a police base in Huetamo. Two additional attacks took place in states just beyond the border in the neighboring states of Guerrero and Zacatecas.

¶4. (SBU) Reports indicate that police and soldiers effectively repelled the eight individual attacks and Rueda Medina remains in custody. Although reports vary on the

total number fatalities on both sides, initial reports indicated that three police and two soldiers were killed and twelve wounded. Three police were killed in the attack on the convoy on the road near Zitacuaro and the two off-duty soldiers were killed as they returned to their barracks in Zamora. The gunman used hit and run tactics in their attacks. Government sources did not confirm that any cartel members were killed or wounded. Open source reports indicated that at least two cartel members were arrested and remain in custody.

¶5. (C) Comment: Clearly, the government's arrest of Rueda Medina prompted La Familia to launch its attacks in an act of retaliation and intimidation. These indiscriminate attacks against off-duty soldiers and police convoys appeared precipitated by opportunity as much as coordination.

Retaliation against the government when it makes a high level arrest of this nature is not unusual. In this instance, however, the swiftness and apparent coordination of the attacks took authorities by surprise. The ability of this crime syndicate to not only mobilize bands of its members quickly in response to an event but also conduct operations with tactical precision is a development law enforcement officials will need to examine in preparation for moving on high-profile criminals in the future. .

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